

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 OES-07 CCO-00 CIAE-00
OTPE-00 FCC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 OC-06 USIA-06
COME-00 BIB-01 DOE-11 ACDA-12 DODE-00 PM-05 L-03
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9105
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETEL, NG, AG
SUBJECT: NIGER'S SATELLITE GROUND STATION

1. PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE RECENTLY INAUGURATED NIGER'S FIRST
SATELLITE GROUND STATION NEAR NIAMEY, MARKING AN ADVANCE
TOWARD A MORE SOPHISTICATED TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM AND
PROVIDING A DEGREE OF MEANING TO THE SOMETIMES TIRED
RHETORIC OF TRANS-SAHARAN COOPERATION.

2. THE SYSTEM IS ONE DESIGNED FOR LDCS WITH LESS COMMUNI-
CATION VOLUME. IT WILL EMPLOY THE INTELSAT SATELLITE TO
EXPAND COMMUNICATIO WITH NORTH AFRICA (NOTABLY ALGERIA),
AND EVENTUALLY EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE. ALGERIA HAS BEEN THE
DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE GROUND STATION PROJECT. A TELE-
COMMUNICATIONS AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED IN LATE 1975 AND
ALGERIA OFFERED SOME 400 MILLION CFA (DOLS 1.6 MILLION)
IN IMPROVEMENTS, THE CENTERPIECE BEING THE RELAY
STATION. IN ADDITION, ALGERIA HAS TRAINED A TEAM
OF NIGERIEN TECHNICIANS IN ALGERIA TO OPERATE THE
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SYSTEM, THEORETICALLY WITHOUT FOREIGN SUPERVISION.
FINALLY, THE SYSTEM SELECTED, EQUIPMENT PURCHASED
AND ITS SUBSEQUENT CONSTRUCTION WERE OVERSEEN BY
ALGERIA.

3. THE SYSTEM IS PARTLY OPERATIONAL NOW WITH TWO
TELEPHONE LINKS TO ALGERIA. EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER,

IT WILL BE CAPABLE OF SIMULTANEOUS TRANSMISSION OF 24 TELEPHONE CALLS WORLD-WIDE, WITH TELEGRAPHIC CAPABILITY AND ONE CHANNEL OF COLOR TELEVISION. INTELSAT SATELLITES OVER EITHER THE INDIAN OR ATLANTIC OCEANS MAY BE USED ALLOWING IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS WORLD-WIDE. THE GROUND STATION'S 13-METER DISH, ACCORDING TO NIGERIEN OFFICIALS, IS THE LARGEST IN WEST AFRICA. THE CONSTRUCTION WAS LARGELY DONE BY JAPANESE CONTRACTORS WHO INSTALLED ALL MITSUBISHI EQUIPMENT AND HAVE ASSISTED IN LAST-MINUTE TRAINING FOR THE NIGERIEN STAFF.

4. COMMENT: TO NIGER, SUCH A GLAMOROUS SYMBOL OF DEVELOPMENT GENERATES PRIDE AND A CERTAIN SENSE OF BELONGING TO A MORE TECHNICALLY ADVANCED CLUB. CERTAINLY THERE IS A CRYING NEED FOR IMPROVING THIS COUNTRY'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES AND SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS ARE SEEN AS A PRACTICAL LONG-TERM SOLUTION. FOR ALGERIA, PRESUMABLY ALERT TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF HIGHLY VISIBLE ENDEAVORS LIKE THIS AND SEEKING TO EXPAND ITS TIES AND INFLUENCE HERE, THE PROJECT WORKS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THERE IS PRACTICAL SUBSTANCE IN THE OFT-TOUTED IDEA OF TRANS-SAHARAN ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION. END COMMENT.JAMES

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